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Message Text

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70
ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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C O N F I D E N T I A L OTTAWA 3861

POUCHED INFO ALL CONSULATES IN CANADA

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, CA
SUBJ: LIBERAL CABINET GOES ON POLITICAL OFFENSIVE

1. SUMMARY: SEPT 17 LIBERAL CABINET STRATEGY SESSION SIGNALED APPARENT OPENING OF LIBERAL POLITICAL OFFENSIVE TO REGAIN LOST VOTER SUPPORT. STRATEGY IS NOT TO CHANGE UNPOPULAR PAST PROGRAMS BUT TO PROMOTE THEM VIA HARD-SELL MINISTERIAL TOURS THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY. TRUDEAU'S FIRST SUCH EFFORT IN THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES WAS NOT AN AUSPICIOUS BEGINNING SINCE HE ENCOUNTERED CONSIDERABLE HOSTILITY. HARD-SELL OF PRODUCT PERCEIVED BY ELECTORATE AS FLAWED MAY MERELY STIFFEN SALES RESISTANCE. HOWEVER, BEING NO. 2 IN POLLS, TRUDEAU APPEARS DETERMINED TO TRY HARDER. END SUMMARY.

2. ANNUAL LIBERAL CABINET STRATEGY SESSION (SEPT 17) WAS RESTRICTED TO MINISTERS AND TWO NOTE-TAKERS AND DETAILS OF DISCUSSIONS ARE SCANTY. TOM AXWORTHY, A DOMESTIC ADVISOR IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S OFFICE AND ONE OF THE NOTE-TAKERS, TOLD EMBOFF, HOWEVER, THAT THE MAJOR THEME OF THE MEETING HAD BEEN POLITICAL WITH CANDID APPRAISAL OF LOW LIBERAL POPULARITY AND REVIEW OF BEST MEANS TO REVERSE THE TREND.
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3. TRUDEAU PRESS CONFERENCE AFTER THE MEETING
TENDED TO CONFIRM THE HEAVY POLITICAL EMPHASIS OF
THE DISCUSSIONS. TRUDEAU ADMITTED HIS OWN CREDIBILITY
AND THAT OF HIS GOVERNMENT WERE SUSPECT AND HE
MENTIONED TWO MEANS TO REGAIN VOTER POPULARITY.
FIRST, THE GOVERNMENT WOULD THINK TWICE BEFORE IN-
TRODUCING CONTROVERSIAL NEW LEGISLATION AND MIGHT
DROP UNPOPULAR PENDING LEGISLATION, (PRESS REPORTED TRUDEAU
HINTED THAT THE GUN CONTROL BILL MIGHT BE ONE SUCH). SECOND,
HE SAID THAT THE CABINET MUST UNDERTAKE A MOJOR SELLING JOB
AROUND THE COUNTRY TO REGAIN SUPPORT FOR THE LIBERAL PROGRAM.
IMPLEMENTATION ON THE LATTER APPROACH WAS QUICKLY FORTHCOMING.

4. ON SEPT 21, LABOR MINISTER JOHN MUNRO DELIVERED A
WELL-PUBLICIZED SPEECH IN VANCOUVER MAKING THE
CASE THAT CANADIANS ARE BETTER OFF NOW THAN THEY
WERE A YEAR AGO BEFORE THE ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM.
ON THE SAME DAY IN CALGARY, MIN OF SCIENCE AND
TECHNOLOGY HUGH FAULKNER SPOKE IN UNUSUALLY BLUNT
AND STRONG TERMS IN DEFENSE OF BILINGUALISM.
A MEASURE OF CABINET RESOLVE TO CARRY THE
MESSAGE THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY WAS FAULKNER'S
AUDIENCE: THE CANADIAN CLUB OF CALGARY, A
"LION'S DEN" ON BILINGUALISM, IN THE WORDS OF
ONE REPORTER.

5. ON SEPT 25, DEPUTY MIN FOR INDIAN AFFAIRS AND
NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT, ARTHUR KROEGER, EXPRESSED SOME AMAZE-
MENT TO THE DCM AT HOW QUICKLY HIS NEW MIN., WARREN ALLMAND,
HAD SHIFTED INTO HIGH GEAR. ALLMAND, HE SAID, LEFT OTTAWA ON
A SPEECH-MAKING AND FACT-FINDING TOUR THE DAY AFTER HIS
APPOINTMENT.

6. TRUDEAU'S WEEK-LONG TOUR OF THE ATLANTIC PROVINCES,
STARTING SEPT. 20, RECEIVED THE BULK OF MEDIA ATTENTION
AND THE FREQUENT UPROAR CREATED MUST HAVE MADE HIM WONDER
ABOUT SELLING IN THE ROAD. LABOR LEADERS IN PRINCE EDWARD
ISLAND BOYCOTTED ONE MEETING AND TRUDEAU'S REFUSAL TO APPEAR
ON A LOCAL TALK-SHOW RESULTED IN A STREAM OF CRITICAL CALLS.
LATER, IN SAINT JOHN, NEW BRUNSWICK ABOUT 350 WORKERS DEMON-
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STRATED OUTSIDE A HALL IN WHICH TRUDEAU WAS DEFENDING THE
ANTI-INFLATION PROGRAM. UNDAUNTED IN THE UNIQUELY TRUDEAU
MANNER BY BOOS AND CATCALLS AS HE LEFT HIS SAINT JOHN
HOTEL, TRUDEAU QUIPPED, "THANK YOU FOR SMILING" TO THE HECKLERS.
THE NEWS FROM THE ATLANTIC VISIT WAS NOT ALL BAD, HOWEVER, AS
TRUDEAU RECEIVED AN EXTREMELY WARM RECEPTION IN NORTHERN
NEW BRUNSWICK - A HEAVILY FRENCH-SPEAKING AREA. FURTHERMORE,
THE HOSTILITY HE ENCOUNTERED, AS GEOFFREY STECENS IN THE SEPT 24

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GLOBE AND MAIL PUT IT, "MAY BE THE BEST THING, POLITICALLY, THAT COULD HAVE HAPPENED TO HIM" SINCE "UNTIL MR. TRUDEAU CONVINCES HIMSELF HE IS IN TROUBLE, HE WON'T DO ANYTHING ABOUT IT." ADDITIONALLY, INCIVILITY TOWARD A PRIME MINISTER "IS THE ONLY THING THAT COULD MAKE CANADIANS WHO DON'T HAVE MUCH USE FOR PIERRE TRUDEAU FEEL SYMPATHETIC TOWARD HIM."

7. COMMENT: THE INDICATIONS ARE THAT STRATEGY CONSISTS OF THE FOLLOWING ELEMENTS: (1) STICK WITH POLICIES AND PROGRAMS ALREADY ESTABLISHED EVEN IF UNPOPULAR RATHER THAN CONFESSING TO ERROR BY CHANGING THEM (E.G. BILINGUALISM WAGE/PRICE CONTROL); (2) GET OUT ON THE BUSTINGS AND VISOROUSLY HARD-SELL THOSE ESTABLISHED PROGRAMS; (3) ADOPT ONLY THOSE NEW POLICIES AND PROGRAMS WHICH ARE LIKELY TO BE POPULAR. THERE IS A LARGE ELEMENT OF TRADITIONAL TRUDEAU GOVERNMENT ARROGANCE IN POINTS 1 AND 2: THEIR POLICIES ARE RIGHT FOR CANADA AND ALL THAT HAS BEEN LACKING IS SUFFICIENT JAW-BONING TO CONVINCE CANADIANS THAT PIERRE AND CO. KNOW BEST. THE INITIAL REACTION TO THIS STRATEGY IN THE MARITIMES MAY BE AN INDICATION THAT A FAIR NUMBER OF CANADIANS WILL MAINTAIN THEIR SALES RESISTANCE TO A PRODUCT THEY DISLIKE DESPITE VIGOROUS MERCHANDISING. AND TRUDEAU COULD STIFFEN SUCH AN ATTITUDE IF HE PURSUES HIS FAVORITE "NEW SOCIETY" ECONOMIC PRONOUNCEMENTS. AT THE SAME TIME, AS COLUMNIST STEVENS PUT IT, "WHEN HE (TRUDEAU) BELIEVES IN WHAT HE IS DOING, HE PLAYS HARDBALL WITH THE BEST OF THEM". END COMMENT.
ENDERS

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